AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

M.R.Ry. KOMMENI V. RAMACHANDRA NAIDU

of Enangudi, Tanjore District

PRINTED AT
THE MADRAS LAW JOURNAL PRESS,
MYLAPORE, MADRAS.
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With the best compliments
R. Radhakrishnan
20-1-45

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FOREWORD.

Fifteen years back, I had the good fortune to become acquainted with Mr. V. Ramachandra Naidu Garu. As I came to know of him more and more, I developed a high regard for his person and character. Born in a family of landowners and capitalists, he does not possess the "aristocratic outlook" which is commonly attributed to them. He is readily accessible to all and is highly responsive to modern ideas in regard to education and social service.

He has been for a number of years taking an active part in the Theosophical Society and its activities. He has made extensive tours in South India and has been responsible for the starting of Theosophical Lodges at various places in the Tamil Nadu.

Some years back, when the establishment of a Board High School at Nannilam was under discussion, great objections were raised that it would not be possible to secure adequate strength for the school, on account of the proximity of other schools in the adjoining area and

that without proper hostel arrangements the running of a school would not be successful. I then approached Mr. Naidu Garu, to see if he could help us in the idea of starting a Hostel on cheap lines. It was a welcome surprise to him, for he himself entertained an idea of starting a school at Nannilam, from a long time. So he readily fell in with our proposal to start a Hostel. Very soon the Hostel was started under his presidentship and proved to be very useful to the students.

Having a high admiration for his character and views on life, I requested my friend to note down the main incidents in his life in the form of a short autobiography, so that it might serve as an example to people in general. However, my friend was greatly reluctant and it was with great persuasion that I prevailed upon him to write an autobiography contained in the following pages.

In conclusion, I wish my esteemed friend a long life of service and help to others.

(Sd.) P. S. NATESA AYYAR, B.A.,
Sub-Registrar.

NANNILAM, TANJORE DIST.

Kommeni V. Ramachandra Naidu
of Enangudi, Tanjore District.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

M. R. Ry. KOMMENI
V. RAMACHANDRA NAIDU
OF ENANGUDI, TANJORE DISTRICT.

In response to the request of a friend whose wishes I may not disobey, I got down below some of the prominent incidents and noteworthy features of my life—a life not altogether uneventful in the matter of public activity or fruitless in the region of spiritual endeavour. The surroundings in which I was born were not favourable if not actively hostile to the formation of character which delights in the performance of works of public utility, as they are understood in the modern sense. Charity in the days of my youth took the conventional forms of temple renovation and maintenance of chatrams and did not extend to founding schools, opening hospitals, roads, etc., while activities devoted to female education and elevation of the depressed classes were regarded as more or less mischievous. Again, on the

intellectual side, the training normally received by an individual of the class and community in which I was born, was such as to give little scope for study, culture or enlightenment. If, as the sequel would show, I had been able to surmount these handicaps in some measure, it was due to my past Karma and the merciful Providence which provided me with opportunities for being of service to my fellow beings and for the cultivation of a spiritual outlook. If my life had been fruitful in any manner, I must attribute it to my contact with Theosophy and its doctrines at an early stage of my life.

Birth and parentage.

I was born in the village of Enangudi, Nannilam Taluk, Tanjore District on Wednesday, the 22nd of August 1866. I am a Godachatu Kamma of Pippilla Gotra. My grandfather Mr. Swami Naidu, and his two cousins were members of a joint family. My father Mr. Venkatasubba Naidu was the only son in the family. Enangudi was a very small village in those days. There was a small Ganesha temple and a village chavadi on the road side. My grandfather went on a pilgrimage to Setu, where he saw the splendid chatram of the

Nattukottai Chettiars. Soon after his return he built a chatram on a grand scale at Enangudi and endowed the same with substantial landed property for its maintenance. A partition was effected in the family thereafter. I was born a year after the opening ceremony of the chatram. In early childhood I was given some name, which I now forget. On being questioned as to my name, when young, it appears that I gave in reply my present name. My grandfather was a man of active habits and used to ride till a ripe old age. He purchased for my use also, a little pony when I was quite young. But owing to the objection of my father who had apprehensions regarding my safety, the pony had to be sold away, much to the reluctance of my grandfather.

Education.

As the love of my parents would not permit my going out of the village for education, I had to be content with the training given in the local pial school. But by a lucky accident, the Deputy Inspector of Schools Mr. R. Swaminatha Ayyar, examined me when I was in the IV class, along with a prematriculate student of Kumbakonam Town High School; I gave answers to the questions put to me, more satisfactorily than the other

boy. Struck by the prompt answers given by me to his questions, the Inspector sought my parents and strongly urged them to send me to some one of the High Schools for further education, imploring them not to keep me in the pial school any longer. My grandfather being dead, my father reluctantly consented to my being sent to Tiruvarur High School. The climate of Tiruvarur not being agreeable to me, I was allowed to join the St. Joseph's College at Negapatam, where I was admitted into the upper IV class. I had my residence at Nagore and was provided with a single bullock cart to go to and return from the College. I was about to appear for the middle school examination, when a call came from my sick father that I should give up my studies and attend to my family affairs, as I was the only son. I had to yield to his solicitations much to my regret, for I did much above the average in all subjects except Algebra and Geometry. After leaving School, I looked after the family affairs but did not give up study altogether. I continued my studies at home with the help of tutors of whom, I am happy to say, there is one still alive in the person of Mr. Sambasiva Ayyar, now living at Mayavaram. By regular study

of newspapers, I managed to keep in touch with English. The æsthetic side also was not neglected. I practised on the violin and the harmonium, in which I was not an indifferent player. Later in life after I joined the Theosophical Society and after 1903 I learnt Sanskrit with the aid of a Pundit in Nagari and Grantha characters. I also engaged a Hindusthani munshi for a time and learnt to read and write in that language, but having lost touch with it I have forgotten it.

Marriage.

When my grandfather was alive he wanted to see me, when I was 14 years old, married to a girl of almost equal age. But my father wanted that I should wed a girl 6 or 7 years younger than myself, and so did not consent to the arrangement proposed by my grandfather. I was married after my grandfather's death, in my 15th year to an orphan girl (9 years old) of my father's choice.

My father after watching me for a few months in the management of the family affairs, left them completely to my care, even before I attained majority.

My ancestors.

My grandfather was a perfect gentleman. Enangudi became known to the outside world only through him.

He was generous to a fault; in money lending transactions he would make liberal remissions even out of the principal, not to speak of interest. But he would never take land in exchange for the debt as that would bring odium. If he had adopted that policy he would have been the owner of a thousand Velis. My father also was a perfect gentleman, though he was a little stern in insisting on legitimate dues. My father's marriage was somewhat of a romance. After having made arrangements on a grand scale for the marriage of his only son, my grandfather proceeded to the neighbouring village of Arasur just two or three days before marriage to fetch the chosen bride. Much to his disappointment, ill omens attended the event. Just at that juncture a friend went to him and asked him not to worry himself about it, advising him to go to the house north of the one where the chosen bride resided to find another bride fit for his son. They made up together for the northern house, when, lo!, splendid auspicious omens were witnessed. The new bride which was no other than my mother, was brought down to Enangudi and the marriage was celebrated with great pomp and splendour. The marriage was a happy

one. But according to the ideas of those days, the fruitfulness of matrimony consisted in bringing forth a number of male children. In my seventh year my mother brought to bed a female child which died in the confinement room. Disappointed at this, my father's favourite sister advised him to take a second wife. My father, brought up on the idea of those days, was about to do so when a faithful servant intervened and pointed out that such a step would cause disaster to the peace and well-being of myself and my mother. And my father thereupon abandoned the idea. I mention this to give point to a similar incident in my own case. When I was 22 years old, seeing that my wife did not present my old parents with grandsons, my parents pressed me to take a second wife so that they might have the happiness of seeing grandchildren playing about their knees. Being taught to view the relationship of a husband to his wife in a different light to theirs, I firmly put my foot down on the proposal, telling them that if God willed, He could give enough children through my present wife.

Public activities.

When my father entrusted to me the charge of all the family affairs, the idea crept into my mind, that I should make myself useful to the public at large, in the measure that the limited scope of those days permitted. I was fired with the ambition to give my native village the amenities of civilization. The first thing I attempted in this direction was the establishment of a village Post Office, for which, I got up a mahazar. Unfortunately on the unfavourable report of the Nannilam Sub-Postmaster it did not fructify. But I individually applied direct to the Postmaster-General, and the application had the desired effect. In 1886, the village office was established and it continued in that condition for 12 years on a monthly contingent of Rs. 2-8-0. Then it was raised to a Branch Office on Rs. 15 per mensem and then in 1894, the present combined Post and Telegraph Office came into existence. In the infant days of the Post Office, I had to do the duties of Postmaster and Stamp Vendor, lest the Office should be abolished for incompetent work.

The next thing I turned my attention to is the Pial School in which I learnt the three R's. I desired to convert it into a Middle School.

With that idea, I put up a building at my expense, in the chatram lands, but I was not successful in securing Government recognition, owing to the jealousy of a neighbouring school authority. But, it so chanced, that in an interview, I had with Mr. (now Sir) C. G. Todhunter, then Head Assistant Collector, Negapatam, in connection with some tank work I did at the instance of that officer, there was occasion to talk to him about my school. He had the kindness to visit Enangudi and being personally impressed with the building and locality, he got Mr. L. C. Williams, Inspector of Schools, to recognise the School. It did good work and showed cent. per cent. success in the Public Examinations. It flourished for several years but owing to more stringent rules as regards cost of maintenance lately introduced it had to be reduced to the status of an Elementary School, as local help was not also forthcoming.

The next idea that dawned upon me was the establishment of a dispensary. The Taluk Board was pleased to sanction a dispensary at Enangudi with the help of a few thousand rupees I placed at their disposal. It was located in the Chatram Buildings in 1894 free of

rent. It was then removed to the present type-design building to which I contributed my mite. I am still continuing to pay a yearly donation. The chatram was put to very good use in that poor students and patients were fed there.

Such services as I have rendered to the cause of education and other public matters were duly recognised by Government from whom I was the recipient of three certificates given to me first on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, secondly on the occasion of King Edward's Coronation, in recognition of my services on the Local Boards and thirdly on the occasion of the Coronation of H. M. King George V in recognition of my liberality.

Theosophical Society activities.

In 1900, I joined the Theosophical Society. As I was earnestly making attempts to seek Truth, I came in contact with an ardent Theosophist and I found from a study of Theosophical literature, that Theosophy was the best way to realise Truth. I made such rapid progress in my Theosophical Studies that I was initiated into the Esoteric Section in 1904. It was under Theosophical influence that I was impelled to study the Gita and the

Upanishads in the original with the help of a Pundit. There was already something in my mental composition which took kindly to the study of occult subjects. Once in sleep I had a dream and I saw in the dreaming state, a place in which I met a friend. I had not previously visited the place but the physcial features of it, as presented in my dream, agreed with those of the place in every particular. Not only that, but I followed my friend in my dream to other places too, which also were verified to correspond to the actual places. On another occasion when I was performing my mid-day meditation in the upstair hall of my bungalow at Enangudi, my mind was directed to getting some information from the Post Office on the other side of the river. It seems that my thoughts took a material form so that, a Bhagavatar who came to see me saw that materialized form as if I was walking towards the chatram. The walking figure, however, disappeared from his vision. Again on reading the Gita and the Upanishads, I used to get inspired meanings. In the Theosophical lectures I used to deliver, words came as if under inspiration without my being able to comprehend my own utterances. Such phenomena as

these, made me place deep faith in Theosophical literature. The study of pure Hindu Philosophy did not enable me to reach Truth. Doubts occurred which could not be solved. Theosophical literature threw the light of Science over these problems and the solution appeared to me to be intelligible.

Again I owe to Theosophy, the habits of self-discipline, punctuality, regular habits and personal cleanliness. Diet conducive to meditation, *viz.*, vegetable diet was adopted by me deliberately as a rule of life. My example was followed by my wife and the family of my first son-in-law. I have been avoiding garlic, onions, strong astringents, etc., which are hostile to Raja yoga. When young I had taken exercise with dumb-bells, Kurla, Etc., and managed to keep my body fit and shapely. I regularly took walking exercise. I used to walk 16 miles a day at 4½ miles per hour. While riding I did 14 miles a day. Even at this, my present age of 66, I do walking, at least, of 3 miles from 5 P.M. to 6-30 P.M. I never take food out of the fixed hours. Early to bed and early to rise has been my motto. I rise at 5 A.M. and retire to bed at 9 P.M. The result is I have never suffered from high fever or headache. I always

take cold water bath as a rule as it tends to strengthen the body and the nerves.

Birth control.

In my 38th year I began to practise birth control not according to the methods loudly advocated by eminent men and extensively advertised in the newspapers of today. It occurred to me, in my 38th year, having had enough children, that I should practise sex control so that attention might be diverted from sensual pleasures to more useful channels. Celibacy and not unrestricted sensual enjoyment attended with methods of contraception is the true remedy. All that is required is a steady effort of the will. In this attempt, it is superfluous to add, that I had my wife's willing co-operation. We never had any difference of opinion nor the slightest friction on any matter till now. On one occasion, when I was sleeping inside the house of a friend in a town, a certain lady was pressing my legs, when I was sound asleep. On waking up, I realised her evil intentions but did not like to expose her. Any such attempt on my part might enable her to play tricks on me. So, without making the slightest fuss, I called out my servant who was sleeping outside. The lady quietly retreated. This incident

which illustrates the habit of self-restraint and the habit of celibacy referred to by me above, is due to the teaching which I have received and practised.

I may here pause to refer to some personal habits which were formed as the result of the teaching I have received. On the advice of my friends, I stopped the practice of smoking cigars and cigarettes which I had contracted, in my youth. I regret to say that I had not stopped the use of snuff earlier. However at the age of 64, I stopped it much to my benefit, though it was feared that the cessation of a long established habit would lead to trouble. On the other hand the stopping of snuff effected a distinct improvement. I have never caught cold thereafter. My mind has never been at peace till I have performed my legitimate daily duties promptly. I never like anything to be kept in arrears, unless there are strong reasons for it. My friends used to remark that I had ever been prompt in replying to correspondence. When I was in charge of the administration of my property I used to write out the accounts myself and would not leave it to my accountant, as would be evident from a perusal of the account books I had handed over

to my son. I had an invincible objection to receiving trust money. I was never out of time in the making of payments due from me. I used to have a timetable hung up in the wall for sometime and afterwards I used to perform my daily duties automatically. I mention the above facts for the reason that they present an obvious contrast to the normal life of a mirasdar of my type, who generally has no control over the time at his disposal.

I may here narrate briefly the work I had to do as an Honorary Theosophical Society Lodge Inspector. I was appointed as such in 1907. I held that office till 1927. During that period I was responsible for the starting of several Lodges in the Tamil Area. As many as 1,000 members have been admitted into the Theosophical fold at my instance. Brother S. Rajarama Ayyar used to introduce me to friends as the father of many lodges in the Tamil Districts. I was directed to do propaganda work for the Theosophical Society in the course of which lectures were delivered with the aid of magic lantern slides which I bought for Rs. 400. Laterly I made a present of it to the Guindy National High School. In the history of the Theosophical Society in Tamil

districts Enangudi was the very first place wherein a lodge with members, some of them knowing English, was formed. In the Tanjore District alone Theosophical Society lodges rose from 7 to 50. While doing propaganda work the Theosophical Society General Secretary pressed me to submit T. A. Bills for the rather extensive tours I performed. I declined to receive any pecuniary assistance from the funds of the Theosophical Society saying that I had already been furnished with enough funds by my Karmic agents. My association with the Theosophical Society was responsible for three or four tours in northern India of which I shall make mention later on. I was the Editor of a Tamil Theosophical Journal "Gnanodhayam" for two years. When it changed its name to "Samarasamargam" I became Joint Editor. Besides, I had to do some translations into Tamil of sacred works. One of them was the Bhagavad Gita in Grantha characters, which was well appreciated by Pundits. A number of Theosophical pamphlets in Tamil were written, printed and distributed by me.

Temples.

Beyond co-operating with my cousins of the other two pannai in renovating the ruined Siva temple at Enan-

gudi, I had not interested myself in the management of temple affairs. If desired, I could have served on the Devastharam Committee of the Tanjore District. But my fear that I might not do proper justice to the work according to my lights, prevented me from making any attempts in that direction.

Local Boards.

As a member of the Taluk and District Boards, for some 18 years, it was my duty to visit Schools, Hospitals, and Rajah's Choultries and to bring any irregularities in any of them to the notice of the authorities.

Arbitration.

I was able to gain the confidence of the surrounding people to such an extent that litigants in Courts of law sought my aid as arbitrator for the disposal of their cases.

Relations with officials.

I also enjoyed the confidence of the powers that were. Mr. C. T. H. Johnson, Sub-Collector of Negapatam did me the honour by sending papers for confidential report. And it was my duty to send him unbiased and accurate reports.

Improvement of Enangudi.

In my efforts to improve the condition of Enangudi, my proposal to have the road between Nannilam and Nagore metalled succeeded. There was also a proposal initiated by me to introduce mono rail there. It did not take effect. But motor buses are plying now. Among some of my projects which proved abortive owing to lack of local support was the attempt to convert Enangudi into a union. Similarly my effort to establish a Co-operative Society there was defeated by capitalists' jealousy. I allowed the opening of bazaars and hotels on the road side for a nominal rent.

Female Education.

Female Education was a pet scheme of mine. Very few girls attended the Middle School at Enangudi. So to attract girls for education, I engaged a woman teacher at my expense for the school and I am happy to say that local people took advantage of it for giving education to their girls. Mr. and Mrs. C. T. H. Johnson had occasion to visit the school and the latter was pleased to write to me an appreciative letter which I still preserve. So far as my own female children were concerned, I gave them sound education in Tamil, Telugu and Music.

Panchama Education.

In the midst of great opposition I started a Panchama School at Enangudi and managed it for some time. I advised the boys to wear the Saiva or Vaishnava marks and to come to school neatly dressed. The result was that the boys could not be identified as Panchamas and they were mistaken for caste people, so much so, that local fanatics complained to me saying that they became polluted by their approaching the pupils who could not, on account of their neat attire and appearance, be identified as Panchamas. Fortunately the Labour Department came in and took over the management of the school which is now located a few yards west of the Theosophical Society Lodge at Enangudi.

Nannilam High School.

For a long time it was my ambition to see a High School established at Nannilam. With that object in view I made a proposal at the time of the coronation of H. M. King George V. A resolution to that effect was passed. But owing to some opposition it was dropped and instead of a school a choultry was established at Nannilam. The choultry, however,

proved to be the nucleus for the birth of the school itself later.

Fortunately for my scheme, I received unexpected support for it at a time when I thought there was little chance for a school coming into existence. A merciful Providence had arranged for the advent into Nannilam of two officers in the persons of Mr. T. R. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, B.A., Tahsildar (now Presidency Magistrate, Madras) and Mr. P. S. Natesa Ayyar, B.A., Sub-Registrar, Nannilam. Both of them besides being able and efficient officers in their own spheres, took special delight in leaving permanent marks of their administration, in the shape of schools, hostels and other works of public utility in the places they served. Various objections were put forward for the establishment of a school at Nannilam, while two schools within easy distance of it in Mayavaram and Tiruvarur were efficiently run. Besides, the difficulty was pointed out that without a hostel as a necessary adjunct, no school could possibly work. I guaranteed the successful working of a hostel on the cheapest of terms and thus one formidable objection was removed and paved the way for the establishment of the Board High School. This was due

to the untiring efforts of the two officers mentioned above and to the sympathetic attitude of the late Sir A. T. Maracayar, Taluk Board President and that of Dewan Bahadur V. K. Ramanujachariar, District Board President. Side by side with the school, the hostel, which was established with funds contributed by me and various other gentlemen of the locality, is, I am glad to say, working fairly satisfactorily.

Children.

My two surviving sons are Ch. R. Govindaraju Naidu and Ch. R. Radhakrishnan. The former was studying in the Board High School, Tiruvarur, but having failed to get promotion to the IV Form, left the School in depression. Then I sent him to Madanapalle, but not liking to remain in the III Form, in which he was taken, he, of his own accord prepared for the Cambridge Senior examination. He did not stick to that idea. With no higher educational qualifications and again of his own accord he went to Colombo and joined a medical class. But as martial law was proclaimed on account of rioting between the Sinhalese and the Musalmans he had to leave the place for home. Then he attempted to go to Europe ; but owing to an attack of fever on the way, he was de-

tained in a French Port and returned home. A second time he went to London, with the aim of studying medicine, but returned home, after a short stay of four or five months. I did my best for him, but he could not claim to have more than what his past Karma ordained. He has picked up some general knowledge without receiving recognised labels from the Universities. As he did not show any aptitude for the management of family affairs, I did not entrust him with the management thereof. The moment I understood that some misunderstanding worked in his mind, I immediately effected a partition with him, to save trouble and worry. As regards my second son, I sent him from Tiruvarur, where he was studying, to Madanapalle for further studies. Then he joined the III Form and got promotion to the IV. But as I desired to retire from continued management of the family estate, like my father, I pressed him to come home, to be in touch with the management, without prejudice to his general studies, under a graduate, as private tutor for a period of three years or so. He accordingly came home and his educational equipment is quite adequate for managing the family property. My first daughter Srimathi Krish-

nammal, was married to Mr. M. R. Muthukrishna Naidu, B.A., Edamanal. Shiyali Taluk. I gave her education in Tamil, Telugu and music. After her marriage while she was living with her husband, at Saidapet, who was studying in the Law College, she picked up some knowledge in English also through a private tutor. She can play gracefully on the violin and the harmonium and has a good knowledge of swarams. But unfortunately in December, 1921, my first son-in-law Muthukrishna Naidu died leaving behind him one daughter and one son. This event had a very important bearing on my own life, as I had to leave my ordinary avocations at Enangudi and other places and betake myself to Edamanal, to be in charge of the estate of my deceased son-in-law, which was then heavily encumbered. By judicious management of the estate for 5 or 6 years, I had the debts cleared off completely to an extent of 2 lakhs and made matters easy for my grandchildren. My grand-daughter Miss Vanajakshi, now 16 years old, is allowed by her mother, to prosecute higher studies. She is to appear for the public S. S. L. C. Examination in March next.

My second daughter Sreemathi Seethalakshmi was married to Mr. Kothanda Ramasamy Naidu of Alangudicheri. Unfortunately she died in the confinement room recently leaving three sons and a daughter. From this it can be seen that I had more than my due share of domestic troubles, sorrows and responsibilities. But the teaching which I have received enabled me to look at Samsara, with its endless calamities and troubles, as a training ground for aspiring souls to gather wisdom by experience and to attain liberation by gradual evolution. In my younger days the only places which I was allowed to visit were Arasur, my mother's birth-place and Thirukkannapuram in which is situated the famous Vishnu shrine. They seemed to me to be cities of palaces. In my thirteenth year or so there occurred an opportunity for me to see the outside world. My father then started with me and my mother on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram. The pilgrimage in those days was not like anything that is done to-day. The pilgrimage of these days is not worth the name at all, and it has absolutely no educative value. The pilgrimage of my early days had a real educative value. Even though at that time

there was train communication at least between Tiruvarur and Madura, my father and his co-pilgrims, nearly 250 in number started from the village with about 100 bullock carts followed by watchmen with guns, by dhobies, physicians, etc. For refreshments on the way they took rattan boxes filled with condiments of various kinds. Besides, they carried grinding stones, pestles, mortars and mud pots. As tooth powder was not in vogue then, they carried cow-dung ashes in a bag. For fuel they took cow-dung cakes and firewood. The medicine-chest was not also forgotten. In those days there were no coffee hotels even in big towns. One must depend upon "conjee," "thosais" or "iddalies" or must be content with cold rice. With the above accompaniments and others too numerous to mention, the pilgrims started for Sethu, halting every day in a convenient chatram on the way after journeying ten to twenty miles a day. On the return journey we passed by Madura. On the way we halted at Thiruppuvanam in a chavadi, where a funny incident happened. One of our servants imagining that he had caught a thief cried out for light. The man who was caught, thinking that he had caught a thief gave out a similar

cry. But when the lantern was lit there was loud laughter, as it was found that both the imaginary thieves were our own servants. From Thiruppuvanam we proceeded to Madura leaving the carts there with instructions to bring the same home by the route we had taken. At Madura we took train and arrived at Thiruvarur and reached home. This was my first taste of travels abroad. My inclination for travel asserted itself at later periods of my life. In 1906, I went to Benares on a visit accompanied by my mother and leaving my wife at home to look after my second son who was quite young. My second trip to Benares was in the year 1915. My first trip to Benares made us realise that travel in Northern India could be best done when undertaken in the cold season. During my first trip which was made in the hot season my mother suffered from dysentery and all except myself and two or three followers, from fever. The second trip was undertaken in the cold season and we experienced no trouble whatsoever. A third time I went to Benares along with Sir T. Sadasiva Ayyar's party. I had occasion to visit Bombay in company with my wife, second son, and second son-in-law, to attend the Theosophical

Convention, visiting Humphi, Poona and Hubli on the way. It is hardly necessary for me to say how valuable was the company of Sir T. Sadasiva Ayyar, whose life of simplicity and spirituality is well-known to all. Once while I was on a pilgrimage tour in the Tinnevelly District with my mother, wife and first daughter, who was only two years' old, we halted at Courtallam for a few days. One morning after coffee, we went to "Thenaruvi" in the top-most of the hills. There as I sat down I was so struck by the natural beauty, that I forgot myself and the external world and plunged as if in deep "Samadhi", though at the time I had no previous experience of even ordinary meditation. That was my first experience of Cosmic consciousness, which is even now fresh in my mind. But as my fellow companions were not touched by natural beauty similarly, they had a bath and were waiting for me to get up. But as I did not stir, from my fixed posture, they cried aloud and woke me up saying that it was high time to get home for meals. Their noise reached my ears, as if from the bottom of a deep well. To my great sorrow my happy Samadhi was disturbed by my companions who

could not understand such things. Then I rose with great reluctance bathed and reached our destination. In 1929, I went to Nandi Hills, where I saw innumerable natural lights round the hills at night. In 1930, I went to Ceylon with my wife, visited Kandi and stayed there for 6 weeks or so. There we saw the world-famous "Peridenya" garden, Newara Elya, Seetha area, Hackala gardens and Colombo. In 1931 I visited Conoor and stayed there for 6 weeks or so. This year I visited Kodaikanal and stayed there for two months. Being pleased with the climate of the Kodai Hills, I have purchased a site for constructing a cottage for the Edamanal Estate.

Sanyasam.

On several occasions, the idea of taking sanyasam was disturbing my mind. My idea was that I should devote my time to spiritual sadhana undisturbed by contact with worldly people. But I never meant to seclude myself in a solitary place, and keep idle without rendering service to humanity. Somehow after deep deliberation, I gave up that idea, thinking that mental sanyasam as taught in the Gita was far better than sanyasam in outer garb.

After rescuing the Edamanal estate from its embarrassments, I have practically settled at Adyar. Even before going to Edamanal in 1922, I had constructed a Theosophical lodge building at Enangudi with two out-houses at a cost of a few thousand rupees and endowed it with land to the extent of 11 acres or so for the upkeep of the lodge. At Adyar my time is taken up by Theosophical studies and co-masonry work.

Adyar Life.

At Edamanal I induced my daughter to make a yearly contribution of Rs. 360 to the rural dispensary. I caused a Panchama School to be started for boys between 14 and 21 years old. These boys were taught after the completion of the harvest and before the commencement of the next cultivation season. The period between the 14th and 21st year of a boy is an impressionable one, when education imparted to a boy for a short time is as good as that received by a boy studying regularly for years in a school. This was tried as an experiment in Edamanal and it was very successful. The experiment was first initiated by Rao Sahib S. V. Kanakasabai Pillai, Retired Assistant Engineer, Mannargudi.

At Edamanal.

Taluk and District Boards.

The extraordinary fuss and hurly-burly, which an election for local boards and municipal councils of to-day occasions, put me in mind of some incidents in my own life. Once there were two vacancies in the District Board of Tanjore to be filled up by election by the Negapatam Taluk Board. Mr. C. T. H. Johnson, Sub-Collector and President of the Taluk Board thought that I would be elected to one of the two seats. But I did not approach my fellow members requesting them to record their votes in my favour, thinking, that if they thought me worthy of the place, they would themselves elect me, without seeking their suffrage. Some other members stood as candidates, sought the help of the voters and got themselves elected. Of course I could not blame the voters, because I did not make any request to them. The President finding that I was not returned by election recommended for me a seat by nomination, immediately after he finished the election and in that way I got a seat. Later on Mr. C. G. Todhunter, I. C. S., Sub-Collector of Negapatam not only nominated me to the Taluk Board, but recommended

me to the District Board without my solicitation.

My Friends.

Of the distinguished people whose friendship I had the privilege of enjoying I may mention the name of the late Dewan Bahadur A. Ramachandra Ayyar Avl., late Chief Judge of Mysore. He took very great interest in my welfare and used to help me with sound advice in my family affairs whenever wanted. His father Mr. Annu Ayyar of Panangudi village was the trusted agent of my grandfather who greatly admired him. Among my other friends who were stalwarts of the Theosophical movement, I may mention the name of Mr. C. N. Subramania Ayyar, B.A., Assistant Inspector of Schools, Brother Raja Rama Ayyar of Kumbakonam, laterly the Editor of "Bharata Dharma". I have already mentioned my association with Sir T. Sadasiva Ayyar Avl.

My Agent.

I would not be justified if in these notes I omit to mention my relations with my faithful and honest agent Mr. Periaswamy Ayyar of Kayathur. It is all the more necessary to pay my tribute to him as there is a good deal of prejudice in the

matter of his relationship with me. He was in touch with my family from the days of my grandfather. After my father's death he became my permanent agent. He retired from my service only quite recently. Though he has retired, his services are still at the disposal of my sons whenever wanted. The tongue of malice was very active in spreading false reports against my agent that I was an unconscious victim of his wiles, but nothing was true. The reason for the vilification was that he made himself unpopular among people who wanted to aggrandise themselves at my expense. He was so jealous of guarding my interest. I know from intimate experience the true worth of my agent and I am not a simpleton to be so easily imposed upon as his detractors wanted the world to believe. I had enough opportunity to satisfy myself of his loyalty to me and to my family. My thanks are due to my agent for his faithful services and I pray that he may lead his retired life at Mayavaram in the enjoyment of health and happiness by the grace of God.

Some incidents.

I may refer to one or two incidents which may illustrate my general outlook on life. Once when I was

alone in the upstair hall of my Enangudi Bungalow, an unknown gentleman came to me with sovereigns of the value of Rs. 60,000 and requested me to preserve and return the same to him after a dispute in his family was settled. I asked him whether he had approached any other person with the same request. He replied that he did not think of approaching any, except myself, as the fittest person in whom confidence might be placed. I then thought over the matter deeply and notwithstanding the great compliment implicit in this strange request, I firmly declined the responsibility which he would fain impose upon me. I frankly told him that the yellow coins might tempt even me at any moment or it might be that my sons would refuse to return them in the event of my death. So I advised him not to approach anyone else with the same request but to go home straight and to bury the treasure secretly in one of his gardens, so that he might unearth them, the moment that the necessity for keeping them buried ceased. But my friend left me in great depression deploring my inability to comply with his strange request.

In the year 1926, I made preparations for leaving Adyar for Edamanal, after having

attended some functions. One of my friends advised me not to start as there were heavy breaches on the railway line. I went to Egmore to enquire about the floods and was informed that it was doubtful, if the train could proceed beyond Chidambaram. But I made up my mind to proceed to Shiyali and purchased ticket for the same, thinking that if the train stopped at Chidambaram I could do some Theosophical propaganda work in the Lodges in that locality and that my presence at Chidambaram would be more useful to my people at Edamanal in such anxious periods than my stay at distant Adyar. Fortunately my train proceeded to Shiyali itself. In fact it was the last train that was allowed to proceed beyond Chidambaram for some weeks together. The very next day after I joined my people at Edamanal the whole village was in floods owing to the breach in the Coleroon. For a day or two we could not go out of the bungalow even to answer calls of nature. The flood water was running with terrific velocity. The situation became so hopeless and dangerous that we had to seek safety by leaving the bungalow with all my people with the aid of "Catamarans" to Thirumalaivasal, a sea-port town 2½ miles away,

which is a place fairly high in level. All the intervening space between Edamanal and Thirumalaivasal, barring about 4 furlongs in the neighbourhood of the latter, were one sheet of water terribly affected by the floods. It took a week or so for the flood to subside and for me to return home with my people. Edamanal Chatram tope which is a high level land afforded shelter for thousands of people in distress in those anxious days. Had it not been for the fact that I started by the train that I took, I could not say to what straits my people at Edamanal would have been reduced and my anxiety for their safety would have been extreme. It was God that averted anxiety and restlessness.

Kamma Conference.

I had the honour to preside over the first Kamma Conference which was held at Villupuram. My idea was to take advantage of the movement for starting an Education Fund for the benefit of Kamma youths. Unfortunately the scheme did not fructify as the rich among my community thought that they would have to subscribe more than their proportionate share of donations.

Orphanage.

For a long time I cherished the idea of starting an Orphanage. Later on I thought of working for an existing institution in need of support rather than creating a new one. Fortunately Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi had started an orphanage for girls in Mylapore, giving them boarding and education. She has kindly acceded to my request to receive financial help from me for the institution.

Conclusion.

I believe from the above short sketch of the principal events of my life it would be abundantly clear that I had escaped the narrow outlook and the commonplace interests which generally fall to the lot of the men of my class and community born in the sixties of the last century. It had been my peculiar good fortune to study religious literature, to come in contact with earnest men imbued with a desire to promote human welfare, to broaden my vision with extensive travels and to devote not an inconsiderable portion of my time and resources for service to fellow men according to my lights. My religious faith had been the mainstay of my life and had enabled me to maintain the equilibrium of Soul in the face of domestic sorrows,

trouble and worries due to jealousy and intrigue. For the blessings which I had enjoyed in this life and for the spiritual uplift which it had been my privilege to receive, I tender my humble thanks to the Beneficent Ruler of us all.

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